



Dear Members of the Education Committee,

My name is Ellen Benham and I am writing in support of ***Raised Bill No. 5467; An Act Establishing A Red Ribbon PASS Program.***

I have been an educator for 37 years in the public schools and currently in higher education and have seen first-hand the effects of physical inactivity of school age children. My job as an educator is to make sure my students are physically active for 90% of the class time but once they left my class, they had little to no activity for the rest of the day.

Today's youth are among the most inactive generation in history, according to the American Obesity Association. The Connecticut School Health Survey - Youth Behavior Component - Hartford, CT, June 2012, states that; two-thirds of Hispanic (61.1%) and black (65.9%), and half (45.3%) of white students, do not get the recommended level of physical activity during an average week. One out of every nine students (11.5%) did not participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity in the seven days prior to administration of the YRBS survey. More than 1 in 4 CT. high school students watches TV for 3 hours or more on an average school day; this rate is highest among black (46.0%) and Hispanic (32.4%) students.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, overweight adolescents have an estimated 80% chance of being obese as adults; and, if there are issues of being overweight beginning before age 8, obesity in adulthood is likely to be more severe. Physical inactivity, more than what we eat, not only contributes to the rise in obesity, it is now listed as one of the leading causes of death.

John Ratey, the leading expert in brain based learning; calls exercise "Miracle-Grow" for the brain. By supporting the Red Ribbon PASS Program, you will be encouraging schools to incorporate physical activity opportunities for students before school, after school and during the school day. As students move, they are activating their brain cells that allow them to learn new material and retain information they have learned. This Red Ribbon PASS Program is not a program school districts will need to purchase. Instead, it is an initiative that philosophically changes the way teachers deliver instruction so students become more engaged in their learning. PASS, by utilizing purposeful movement while teaching content, can refocus, energize and motivate students.

Movement is a necessity for all children to be physically, mentally and emotionally healthy. Physical activity is naturally instinctive and has very positive effects on memory, language, concentration and academic performance. We often forget that we were born to move. Our ability to think, plan and learn are rooted in the parts of the brain that stimulate movement. Movement initiates the foundations for learning in the brain.

Our bodies were meant to be physically challenged and by doing so, you simultaneously will challenge your brain. The most effective tool for maximizing brain function is movement, which helps to improve circulation making the brain stronger, healthier and happier.

PASS is an initiative for creating physically active school systems that embeds physical activity throughout the school day/system to enable all students to improve or maintain their physical fitness and their overall health and wellness, while enhancing their learning opportunities for improved academic achievement. It also incorporates activities before school, during school, after school, at home and in the community.

This bill will guarantee that school systems will have the opportunity to commit to providing a physical active atmosphere for students, faculty and community members that assist in setting the standard for a healthier, smarter tomorrow across Connecticut.

Thank you for your commitment and dedication to the educational system for all students in Connecticut.

Yours in Health,

Ellen Benham

Ellen Benhan
CTAHPERD Past President 2012-13
SHAPE America Eastern District President

